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DENTAL CARE

BY JOY SABLE

FROM THE time teething begins until the end of our lives, our teeth and gums need to be cared for—after all, a lovely smile lights up your whole face.

Eunice Marber has been a hygienist for 34 years and works in Bushey, Hertfordshire. She has seen many changes in dental care over the decades. “During this time, the most effective change that has improved dental health is the electric brush,” she says. “Now more people are aware they have to brush all the surfaces of all their teeth for about two minutes. One thing I find myself telling patients is that after they have brushed their teeth, they should spit out any excess toothpaste but not rinse their mouth. This is because it will wash away the concentrated fluoride in the remaining toothpaste, thus diluting it and reducing its preventative effects.”

Marber advises cleaning a baby's teeth as soon as they appear, initially with a soft cloth and then with a soft child's toothbrush.

“A small, pea-sized amount of children's toothpaste (low-fluoride) can be used from 18 months of age. A child who enjoys the flavour of his or her toothpaste is more likely to enjoy brushing. You will need to help your child brush their teeth until they can do it themselves (usually about six or seven years old).”

“Sometimes, to encourage your child to brush their teeth, all it takes is a toothbrush with a favourite character or one that lights up and plays music. Singing special songs can also make the ritual a lot more fun.

“Often, children pay more attention to a message when they don't hear it from their parents. You may have better luck getting those teeth brushed if you read books about dental hygiene or watch a video or play a mobile app or tablet game.”

Marber stresses the importance of cleaning between the teeth, as this is where decay and gum disease can occur, caused by food debris and the build-up of plaque.

“There are now several different products that can aid cleaning interdentally.

Flossing isn't just for dislodging food wedged between your teeth. It may also reduce gum disease and bad breath. If flossing is not for you, you can use interdental brushes or single-tufted brushes instead. These may be better for those who have gaps between their teeth.”

The teenage years are the first major opportunity to correct wonky, uneven teeth in a maturing mouth. It is a common sight in an orthodontic practice to see a waiting room filled with girls and boys in an assortment of school blazers as they wait for their appointment to

adjust their braces. And these devices need no longer be the unsightly mass of metal that schoolchildren used to be teased about.

Removable braces are often used in younger patients, who may still have some baby teeth. Ceramic braces are less noticeable than metal appliances and so are popular with teenagers and older patients. Invisalign treatment uses clear plastic aligners to straighten the teeth, without the use of traditional braces, while lingual braces are applied behind the teeth (nearer the tongue) so

Tooth tips by word of mouth



Bond while you brush: turn oral hygiene into a fun ritual from a young age



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Key to wearing well whatever your age

BY PROF ANDREW EDER

TOOTH WEAR is no respecter of age; in fact, it is increasing across the UK among both the young and the old. But why does it matter? After all, it is a natural part of ageing. True — but lifestyle can accelerate and exacerbate this process. The result may be tooth sensitivity and an unsightly smile due to teeth becoming short and unattractive, while rough tooth edges can harm the lips, tongue and inside of the cheeks.

More than three-quarters of adults and more than half of children show signs of tooth wear.

What is more, sadly, 35 per cent of 12-year-olds and 28 per cent of 15-year-olds are too embarrassed to smile or laugh due to the condition of their teeth.

Without doubt, tooth wear has the potential to affect a person's self-esteem for life. And that is not something any of us want for ourselves or for our children.

What can be done to minimise and prevent tooth

wear that might otherwise require expensive and extensive dental treatment further down the line?

Particularly common among children and young adults, tooth erosion is caused by consuming acidic foods and drinks; the acid attacks the outer surface of the teeth.

Culprits include fruit juices, smoothies, sports beverages and fizzy drinks (including sugar-free).

Where possible, drink still water or low-fat milk between meals, lim-

